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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 28 June 1995, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. DE SILVA (Sri Lanka)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

GRANTING OF OBSERVER STATUS TO SOUTH AFRICA

1. The CHAIRMAN said that he had received a communication from the representative of South Africa requesting that South Africa be granted observer status in the Committee at its 1995 session. He took it that the Committee wished to grant observer status to South Africa, in accordance with established procedure.

2. It was so decided.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 49/82 OF 15 DECEMBER 1994 (continued)

3. Mr. QIN HUASUN (China) said that China had consistently supported the States of the Indian Ocean region in their efforts to safeguard their national independence and sovereignty and protect regional peace, security and stability. China fully understood the desire of those States to establish the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace and welcomed the positive developments in the international situation which were conducive to the achievement of that goal which, it sincerely hoped, would be attained at an early date.

4. China was of the view that the establishment of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace required the joint efforts of all States. Major Powers outside the region must remove their military presence from the region and refrain from threats against and interference in the internal affairs of the States of the region. China supported the relevant General Assembly resolutions, which pointed out that the participation of all permanent members of the Security Council as well as major maritime users in the work of the Committee would facilitate development of a dialogue to advance peace, security and stability in the region. At the same time, the States of the region themselves must develop their relations, strengthen cooperation and solidarity and, putting aside their differences, seek common ground on the basis of the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. China advocated that the States of the region should seek no armament beyond their reasonable defence needs and take practical measures to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction into the region.

5. China supported the continued consideration by the Committee of new alternative approaches with a view to giving new impetus to the process of strengthening cooperation and ensuring peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region and hoped that the Committee would achieve positive progress in that regard.

6. Mr. PEERTHUM (Mauritius) said that in the context of the new alternative approaches put forward at the previous session, the need to encourage measures for cooperation in economic, scientific, technical, environmental and humanitarian fields which could contribute to regional peace and security and,

where appropriate, promote regional economic activities, had been stressed. One such initiative envisaged the establishment of an association of Indian Ocean rim States on the basis of cooperation, the optimal exploitation of their natural and human resources, the furtherance of dynamic complementarities and interdependence, and economic integration.

7. The countries of the Indian Ocean perimeter accounted for about one fifth of the world's arable land and about one third of the world's total population. The region had abundant mineral deposits, and also agricultural and marine resources. The idea of establishing an association of Indian Ocean rim countries in order to harness their enormous economic potential had been supported by a number of States of the region. The ocean rim countries, particularly the island States, would benefit enormously from increased access to markets in Asia, Australia and Africa and the Gulf countries, and also to the latest technologies and scientific knowledge; there would also be greater impetus to the development of tourism and the services sector and greater integration in the world financial markets.

8. India, Australia and South Africa, which had the necessary expertise, experience and capabilities, could play a decisive role in the formation of the association of Indian Ocean rim States. As far as Mauritius was concerned, it was prepared to play its part in the establishment of the association. In March 1995, Mauritius had initiated and hosted a meeting of experts from seven countries to discuss the initiative; representatives from Governments, the business sector and the academic sphere had participated. The main objectives had been to build consensus around the concept, identify possible areas of cooperation and formulate an action plan for the formation of the association with the aim of achieving economic cooperation in the short term and paving the way for integration in the long run. Membership would be open to all States within the geographical boundaries of the Indian Ocean. Military and security matters would be excluded from the scope of the association's discussions.

9. A joint communiqué had been issued after the meeting of experts and was devoted mainly to the concept of the association of Indian Ocean rim States, the need for cooperation in the region, the scope and objectives of cooperation, membership of the association and its institutional structure. A working group under the chairmanship of Mauritius had been set up in order to do further work on the ideas put forward.

10. It was envisaged that a tripartite forum would be established to promote economic cooperation, bringing together representatives of Governments, business and academia. The following principles would underlie the entire concept: cooperation must be based on respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful coexistence and mutual benefit; it must not be a substitute for bilateral and multilateral cooperation but should reinforce and be complementary to such cooperation; it must be consistent with bilateral and multilateral obligations; decisions must be taken on the basis of consensus, and controversial issues would be excluded from scope of deliberations.

11. The main objectives of the Indian Ocean rim initiative would be to promote the welfare of the peoples of the participating countries; encourage the

sustained growth and balanced development of the region; formulate and implement programmes for economic cooperation; reduce impediments towards the freer flow of goods, services, investment and technologies within the region; encourage close interaction of trade and industry, academic institutions, and also the peoples of the member countries; strengthen cooperation and dialogue among member countries in international forums on global economic issues; and promote cooperation in the development of human resources.

12. The initiative would focus on those economic areas which provided ample opportunities to develop shared interests and reap mutual benefits, namely: the facilitation and liberalization of trade and establishment of the necessary infrastructure, the promotion of investment and the formulation of specific programmes of cooperation in other sectors.

13. Mauritius believed that increased economic activities would lead to further economic development among the countries of the region, which in turn would lead to higher standards of living for the people; that would naturally pave the way for enhanced peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region.

14. Mr. LWATULA (Zambia) said that, in the opinion of his delegation, the Committee must attempt to take stock of its achievements in the light of recent developments on the international scene in relation to the principles of the 1971 Declaration.

15. A major concern in the Committee was the absence of some permanent members of the Security Council and of some of the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean. However, his delegation appreciated the presence and continued active participation in the Committee's work of the delegations of the Russian Federation and China. The concept of the zone of peace and the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace were widely supported, as evidenced by the overwhelming votes in the General Assembly.

16. At the same time, it was pertinent to note that all three permanent members of the Security Council which were not participating in the Committee's work acknowledged the changed international atmosphere and the positive changes in international peace and security brought about by the end of the East-West arms race and confrontation, the breakdown of the apartheid system and the birth of democratic South Africa, the new developments in the Middle East, South Africa's abandonment of its nuclear weapons programme, and the active consideration by the Organization of African Unity of the question of declaring Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone. All three permanent members of the Security Council consulted by the Chairman acknowledged the positive nature of the alternative approaches considered in the previous year. His delegation believed that the Chairman should continue to consult them and inform them about the Committee's work.

17. The entry into force of the Convention on the Law of the Sea and the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and also the commitments entered into by the nuclear-weapon States, would contribute to a positive climate in the search for an early achievement of the Committee's goals; it was therefore important for the Committee to periodically take stock of its work so as to chart its course of direction.

18. His delegation requested States which were planning to hold forums on the basic themes of the Committee to send invitations to all States.

19. Mr. JUSUF (Indonesia) said that one of the new alternative approaches was the organization of workshops, seminars, symposiums and similar forums for a candid and objective discussion of the issues involved. Those forums could bring together scholars, observers and experts who were interested in various aspects of the peaceful development of the Indian Ocean as well as government officials in their personal capacity. Such interaction among a broad spectrum of professions and expertise could yield broadly representative viewpoints of not only the littoral and hinterland States but also the States outside the region. Those meetings, held in an informal atmosphere, would be the precursors of more formal intergovernmental endeavours in which all the littoral and hinterland countries, and eventually States outside the region, could participate to discuss, harmonize and coordinate their policies on the Indian Ocean.

20. The validity of that approach had been exemplified by the convening in Perth, Australia, of the International Forum on the Indian Ocean, which had sought to explore opportunities for enhanced regional cooperation on a wide range of issues. It was particularly significant that the agenda had included items relating to the transfer of technology, transport, telecommunications, human resource development and maritime cooperation.

21. The workshops organized by Indonesia on questions relating to the South China Sea had also proved their worth. They had done much to clarify the issues involved. There was a realization that the new security equilibrium in the post-cold-war era could be maintained only by resolving territorial and jurisdictional disputes and by seeking cooperative arrangements for the exploration and exploitation of the resources of the South China Sea.

22. Options for regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean region included naval cooperation, especially among the littoral and hinterland States. Within a framework of improved regional and international security, there was much that could be done by naval ships and aircraft, especially with the assistance of experienced maritime States. The great Powers had a special responsibility to initiate confidence-building measures and lay a solid foundation at significantly lower levels of naval arms and related forces.

23. His delegation noted with deep appreciation the consultations undertaken by the Chairman. The successful outcome of the Committee's efforts would depend on the resumption of participation in the Committee's deliberations by the permanent members of the Security Council and other major maritime users of the Indian Ocean.

24. Mr. RODRIGO (Sri Lanka) said that the past two years of the Committee's work had been characterized by discussions on a broad spectrum of issues, including new approaches. Delegations had sought to develop common ground for a pragmatic way forward. Thus, the Committee had entered a new phase of constructive discussion. That had enabled it to isolate what was divisive and determine areas on which consensus had emerged.

25. At the current time, the overall international situation facilitated regional endeavours. The great Power rivalry in the Indian Ocean region had considerably diminished, if not ceased altogether. The nature of the foreign military presence had changed, although perceptions about the character and reasons for that change continued to differ. The States of the region were seeking to form new partnerships at various levels. It was important that the countries of the region regarded those partnerships as contributing to the stabilization of the situation. Those new partnerships were needed to deal with new and common threats.

26. His delegation had listened with great interest to the presentations made by the representatives of Mauritius and Australia concerning important initiatives to promote regional cooperation. It believed that the general thrust of those initiatives was consistent with the Committee's overall goals and objectives. They represented a specialized and focused approach to cooperation at different levels in non-military aspects of security which were essential for the well-being of the peoples of the countries of the region. There was broad agreement that the root causes of conflicts and of some security problems lay in the economic sphere. His delegation was happy to note that the countries of the Indian Ocean region had already taken action to follow up on such initiatives. Sri Lanka had been and would continue to be an active participant in that process at both the governmental and non-governmental levels.

27. His delegation had listened with great interest to the Chairman's report concerning consultations with the permanent members of the Security Council which, for some years, had not participated in the Committee's work. It was pleased to note that those countries were expressing their continuing commitment to the overall goals of promoting peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region through international and regional cooperation. It noted that some of those countries had different perceptions about the manner in which those goals were to be achieved and had even suggested adjustments in the Committee's mandate. Nevertheless, they had not excluded the possibility of participating in the Committee's work in the context of its new approaches.

28. Sri Lanka believed that further time was needed, both for countries within the region, and for countries outside the region, to consider the feasibility of the various approaches set forth in the Committee's 1993 and 1994 reports. It was also necessary to take into account the ongoing initiatives in the region in order to develop a functional political framework on modalities for achieving the Committee's goals. In that context, his delegation urged the Chairman to continue his consultations with those countries with a view to further developing mutually beneficial dialogue to advance peace, security and stability in the region.

29. His delegation believed that the pragmatic and realistic path agreed upon two years previously was the best way forward. Thus, at its current session, the Committee should recommend that the General Assembly continue consultations with members of the Committee in general and with the permanent members of the

Security Council and the major maritime users in particular in the context of new developments and initiatives within the region.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.